

LENNERIAL

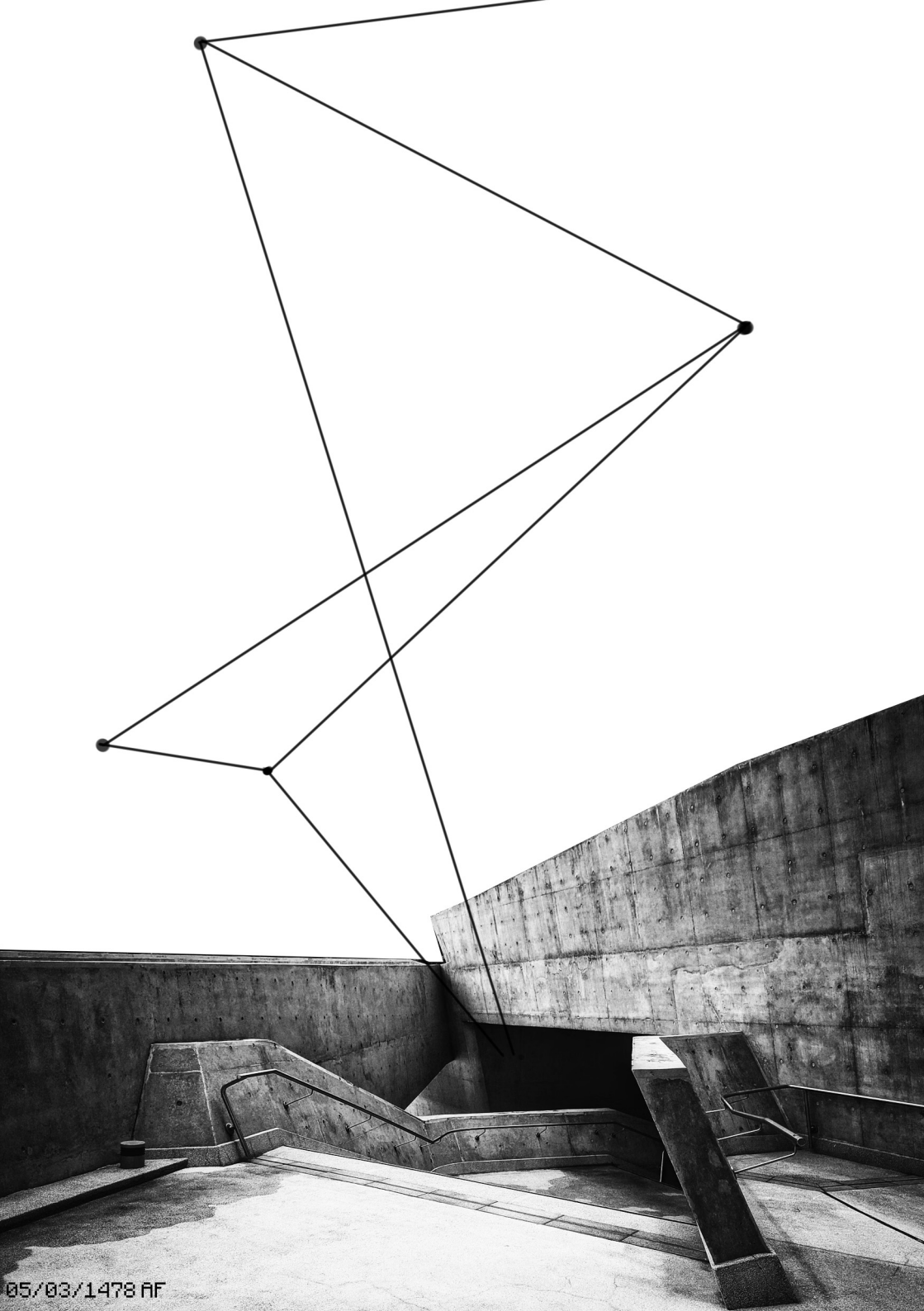


March - April

007

Les Editions de la Marge





Monoliths murmur

Tales of their past visitors

Lost in translation

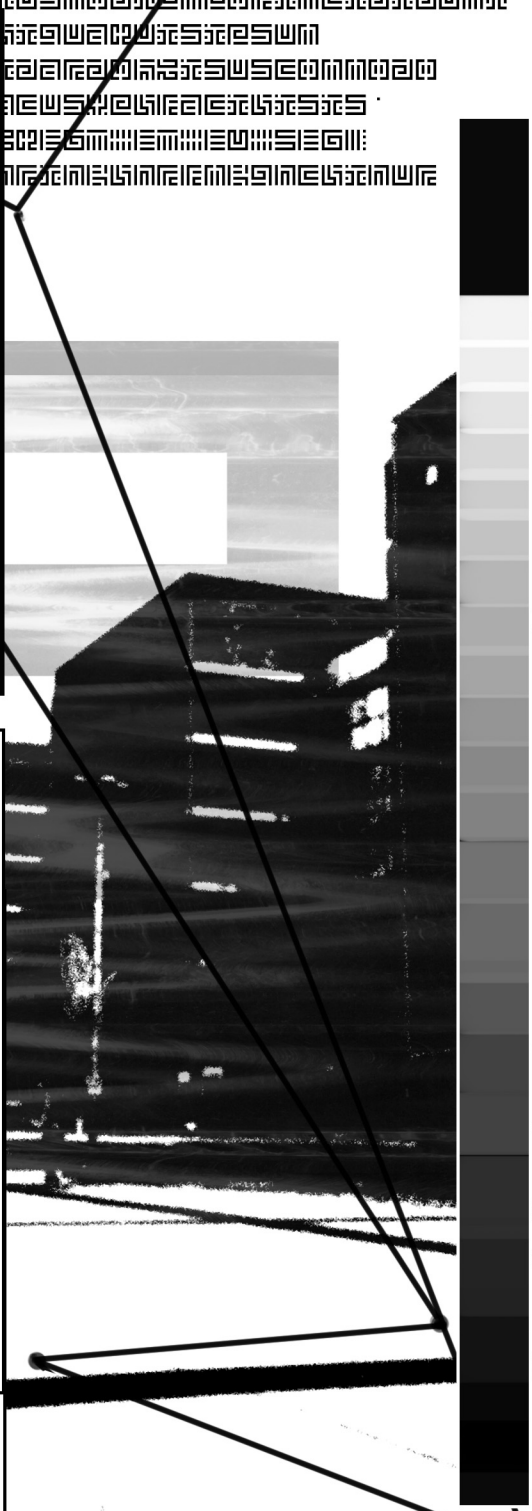
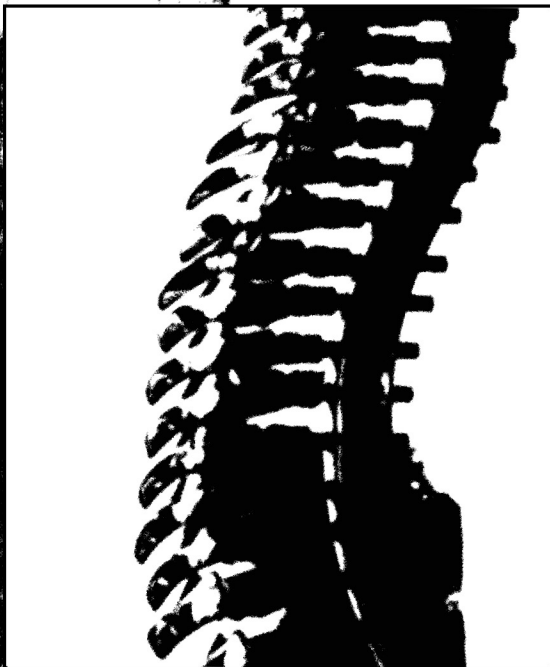
The fog is rising

The perspective's playing tricks

A nice day to roam



Take a closer look
You'll see that this world is made
From nooks and crannies



Connection is lost

System error has occurred

Try again later



The grid ends somewhere

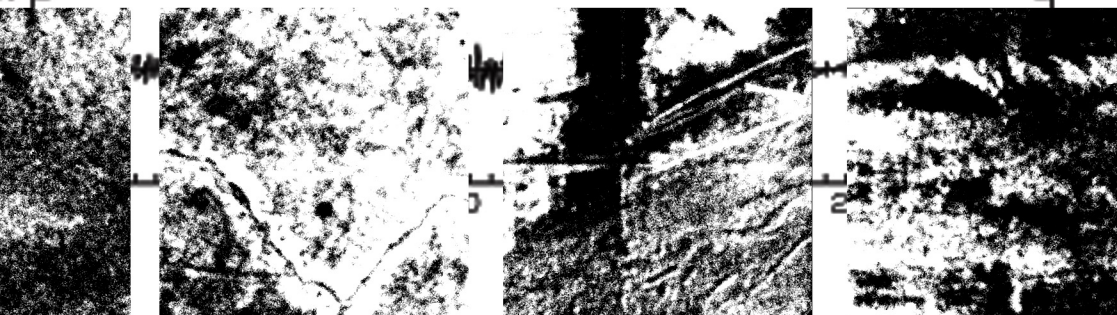
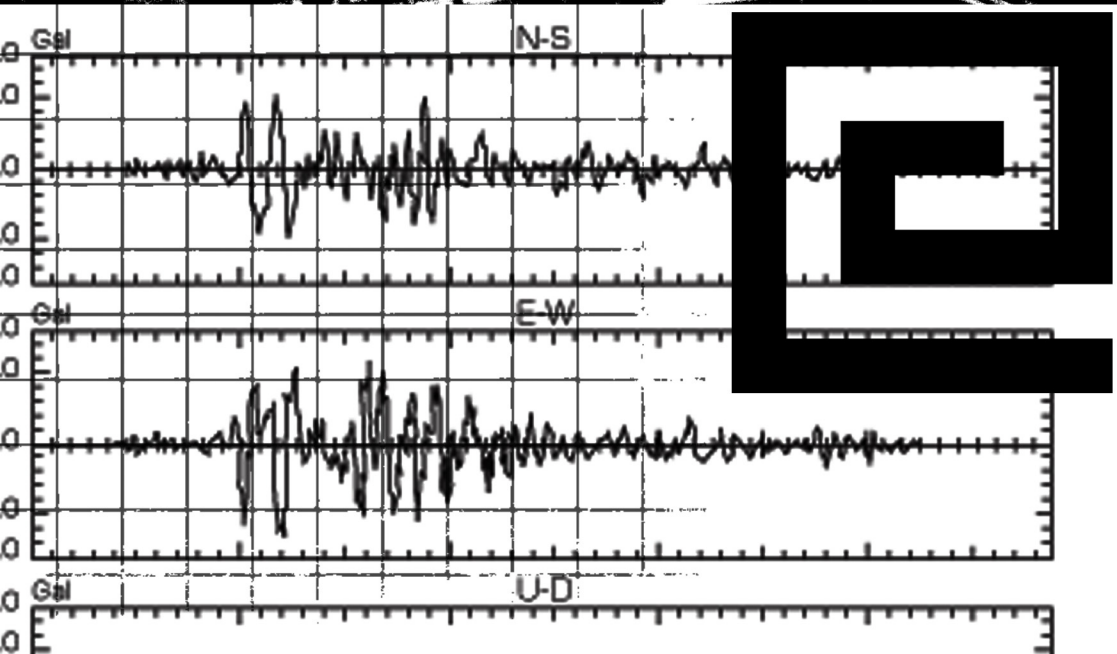
You just have to be careful

Where you put your feet

Interferences

Like ripples on the water

I have lost the path



As the night descends

The wind in the scaffoldings

Sings a silent song

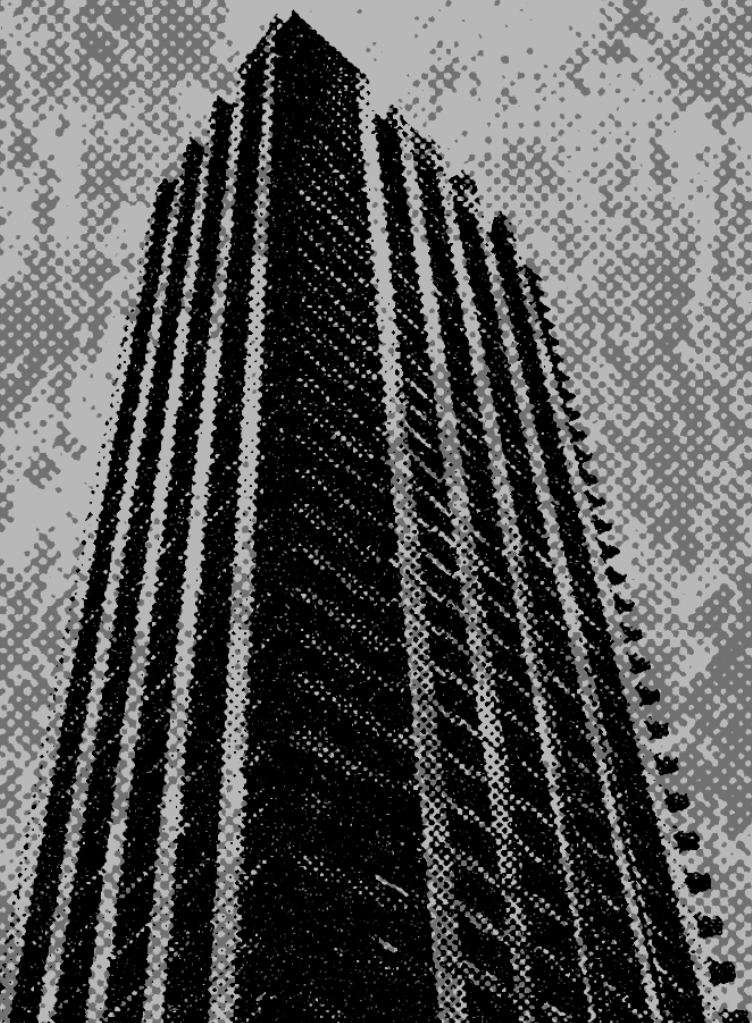
The day dissolving

The air is crisp with static

Fractal pollution

Concrete. Beasts

A page dedicated to ugly and hostile architecture



Deprussian

or. the emotionnal landscapes of post-Soviet post-punk

The other day, I was talking with a guy about that "doomer Russian music" we both liked, and he started telling me about how aesthetically pleasing derelict architecture and slavic despair was. "The sadness there, you know, the grey buildings, the cold, it's like, beautiful in some way." Since I am a very sad Slav who's into architecture, it compelled me to think about the lyrics of my favorite songs, specifically on pathetic fallacy and the imagery of khrushchoba.

You might have never heard the word "khrushchoba", but you definitely know what it is. These decaying neighborhoods, with infinite rows of concrete buildings (also known as panel'ka), have become a defining trait of post-Soviet countries. The name is a portmanteau, combining Khrushchev (the name of the Soviet leader under whose authority those projects were built) and "trusheba" (referring to a slum or a shantytown).

Architecture, this type of architecture specifically, is a topos in contemporary Russian language post-punk. Think of Molchat Doma's album cover: the famous Panorama Hotel on the *Etazhi* cover or the Ryugyong Hotel for *S krish nashikh domov...* The band has definitely contri-

buted to the association of the genre to brutalist architecture in collective imagination. Same for the background of Youtube playlists through which many of us have discovered bands like Sizor, Ploho, Peremotka, Durnoi Vkus and the like. However, what is particularly interesting is the way songwriters depict this "architecture of doom" in their lyrics.

What we call post-Soviet post-punk is the umbrella genre that encompasses cold wave, goth rock, dark wave and synth pop by bands from post-Soviet countries (not exclusively Russian), posterior to the 1990s (bands like Kino, for instance, are outside the scope of our analysis).

Post-punk as a whole is character-



Ekaterinburg, Russia, photo by Pavel Neznarov, Unsplash

alized lyrically by its emotional complexity and exploration of philosophical or political themes. It is thematically close to post-modernism, but also inspired by Situationism, which also had to do with architecture (I might need to write about psychogeography in *Concrete Beasts* one day).

Our subject of interest is the place given to architecture and the urban environment in songs. Through their lyrics, bands like Ploho, Blazh, Sizor or Molchat Doma depict the landscape to depict the prosaic and the real (some might even say the *desert of the real*, but we'll come back to it later). The concrete wall often becomes a screen to project emotions onto, but also a canvas on which to paint a political vision.

Despair

This really is the first emotion that comes to mind when we think of post-punk in general. Gloom and hopelessness are conveyed through the depiction of a subterranean world in Blazh's *Trumi Korablei* (Ship Holds) : " The elevator is taking me to the bottom/I'm reading a sign saying that life is shit. " Here, it is inscribed (literally) in the environment. The line that goes : " Everything is alike here, like in that old movie/ Close the curtains, don't let me step out of the window ", reflect not only the idea of a deep boredom but also refers to suicidal ideations. Boredom and apathy are also a recurring theme, in songs like *Gorki Opit* (Bitter Experience) by Norilsk based band Ploho : " Cities keep growing old outside the window. ". Apocalyptic imagery is also prevalent, namely in Go-



rod Ustal (The City is Tired) : " Corpses in grey houses watch the first channel/ this city has perished, this city is exhausted. " This slow decay could be compared to the more brutal destruction described in *Gestalt* (a sequel of sorts to *Gorod Ustal*) : " Turn around, you'll see the houses burn// The city has waited, it has endured for too long/ And now it's closing up the gestalt ". Religious imagery is also a very interesting feature of *Pustota* (Emptiness), a song dealing with the absence of horizon : " And these buildings have been surrounding me/ My whole life - it's somebody's fault/ It's scary to live there until Judgement Day/ I'm shaking like

cattle awaiting the brand. " Compare this to lyrics from *Zakladka* (the Drug Cache): " Houses are surrounded by houses/ Boxes made out of concrete and flesh ". Both describe a sense of oppression, comfortable yet devoid of perspective.

The city is personified, and it is suicidal. Norilsk, dubbed most depressive city in the world, undeniably inspired the band for some of their gloomiest compositions. In *Pustota*, the tension between the infinite and the claustrophobic is particularly interesting, in the sense that it represents an absolute and crushing solitude.

Alienation

Molchat Doma might be the band that best conveys the idea of social isolation. From *Liudi Nadoyely* (Fed up with People), the introvert's anthem, to *Tancevat'* (Dance), a song about social anxiety, the Belarussian trio has been accurately depicting the feeling of becoming addicted to one's own loneliness. Their band name, which could be translated to " The Houses are Silent ", contributes to this idea : the image of buildings that should be full of human life being deserted is an evocative one. *Kletka* (The Cage), suggests a form of entrapment in one's own solitude. The narrator sees themselves as misunderstood and incapable to connect with people around them : " like burns on a whitewash/ Inexplicable like me // Ring the bell/ Knock on that door/ And no one will open for you/ Run, you fool. "

The same idea can be found in *Trumi Korablei*, when the narrator mentions : " We're like rats running away from the lights/ We live in the holds of ships ". Here, we can infer that the question of class is also at stake : characters living the holds of ships are not merely the asocial, but also the disenfranchised. This violent, dehumanizing environment

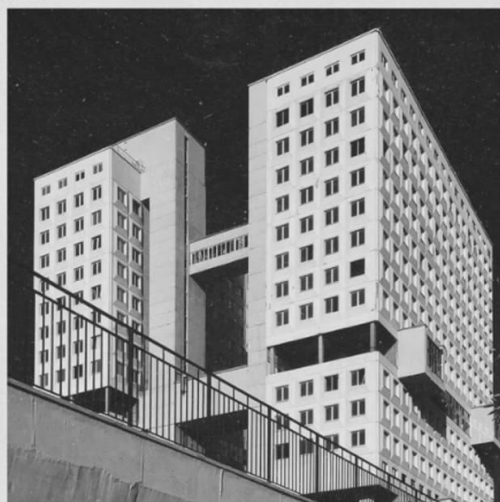
is also the subject of *Pustota* : " Go ask the neighbors/ To stop knocking on each other// Go out in the yard, position yourself/ I'm shooting in a circle. "

Melancholy, in post-Soviet post-punk, is not to be considered as a simple feeling, but also as the base of a political stance.

Disappointment

Stroiteliny Kran (The Building Crane) by Ploho is probably their most political song, relying on the metaphor of the construction site to portray ideology : " Proletarians of various countries/ Are united by the building crane/Laughting hysterically/ At the injuries they get ". Here, the building refers to the USSR, and the bright future depicted in Soviet propaganda. The mason is an archetype in socialist realism, the government sanctioned art movement of the period : he is a hard-working citizen, literally making the world of tomorrow. Builders, enthusiastically dying in workplace accidents are an ironic take on this trope, a way to portray the lives sacrificed to the ideology, to no avail. In 1991, the Soviet Union dissolves, and the various countries composing it experience unprecedented economic and

SIZOR



ХОЛОДНЫЕ СТЕНЫ

Sizor, *Holodnye Steny*, all rights belong to the original author

social crises. If the downfall of communism was predictable, it didn't mean that people and institutions got ready to transition into free market economy. The fall of the USSR left many people without prospects, employment, or political cause to cling onto. This sense of disorientation slowly turned into disillusion, as corruption and banditism became rampant in political circles.

However, the relationship with the past is a complex one. In *Holodniye Steny* (Cold Walls), Sizor add nostalgia to the mix : " Cold walls, driveways from your childhood/ You can't return to them, nor escape them ". The Soviet Union hasn't delivered what it promised, and this feeling of having been stripped from one's future is also the topic of *Socializm* (also by Sizor), especially the chorus : " We won't build socialism/ And we'll never go to space again ". This echoes the feeling of being born too late mentioned in *Gorod Ustal* : " According to witnesses, everything happened, but you arrived late. " The idea of

the world being somehow " used up " is particularly significant here.

The new Russian language post-punk scene therefore positions itself as highly critical of authoritarianism, past and present. It responds to contemporary issues, depicting the prosaic reality of Eastern Europe, the mass unemployment, boredom, alienating modernity, economic crisis and political unrest.

The popularization of the genre in the West, namely thanks to TikTok and YouTube, has, however, contributed to its depolitization, because of the language barrier but also because it is a predictable downside of entering the mainstream. This has, in turn, contributed to a romanticization of the East, Soviet brutality, as a core component of it, has become a symbol of its *beautiful melancholy*. It seemed therefore important to put it in context.



Vladivostok, Russia. Natalya Karpeka. Unsplash



A playlist for wandering through the ruins of the old world :

- ★ Ploho - Gestalt
- ★ Sizer - Holodniye Steny
- ★ Industriya - Razbeg
- ★ Molchat Doma - Kletka
- ★ Ploho - Gorod Ustal
- ★ Son Fire ! - Kto my Otkuda Kuda my Idem
- ★ DIVID - Molchat'
- ★ Blazh - Trumy Korabley
- ★ Durnoi Vkus - Stariye Plastinki
- ★ Zal 600 - Tsiki
- ★ Molchat Doma - Kommersanty

Les Éditions de la Marge

Paris, 2025

Contact: artbylinus3@protonmail.com

<https://linusandryu.wixsite.com/labbylinus>



Creative Common, all rights belong to the author, no commercial use